



## The ABCDE Method for Setting Priorities

Efficiency is doing things right. Effectiveness is doing the right things. Your ability to plan and organize your work, in advance, so you are always working on your highest value tasks determines your success as much as any other factor.

### The ABCDE Method for Priorities

The process of setting short-term priorities begins with a pad of paper and a pen. Whenever you feel overwhelmed by too many things to do and too little time in which to do them, sit down, take a deep breath, and list all those tasks you need to accomplish. Although there is never enough time to do everything, there is always enough time to do the most important things, and to stay with them until they are done right.

### Setting Better Priorities

The best method for setting priorities on your list, once you have determined your major goals or objectives, is the A-B-C-D-E method. You place one of those letters in the margin before each of the tasks on your list before you begin.

"A" stands for "very important;" something you must do. There can be serious negative consequences if you don't do it.

"B" stands for "important;" something you should do. This is not as important as your 'A' tasks. There are only minor negative consequences if it is not completed.

"C" stands for things that are "nice to do;" but which are not as important as 'A' or 'B,' tasks. There are no negative consequences for not completing it.

"D" stands for "delegate." You can assign this task to someone else who can do the job instead of you.

"E" stands for "eliminate, whenever possible." You should eliminate every single activity you possibly can, to free up your time.

By using the A-B-C-D-E method, you can very easily sort out what is important and unimportant. Now focus your time and attention on those items on your list that are most essential for you to do.

### Just Say No

Once you can clearly determine the one or two things that you should be doing, above all others, just say no to all diversions and distractions and focus single-mindedly on accomplishing those priorities.

Much stress that you experience in your work life comes from working on low-priority tasks. The amazing discovery is that as soon as you start working on your highest-value activity, all your stress disappears. You feel a continuous stream of energy and enthusiasm. As you work toward the completion of something that is really important, you feel an increased sense of personal value and inner satisfaction. You experience a sensation of self-mastery and self-control. You feel calm, confident and capable.

### Action Exercise

Here are three ideas that you can use, every day, to help you set priorities and to keep you working at your best:

**First**, take the time to be clear about your goals and objectives so that the priorities you set are moving you in the direction of something that is of real value to you.

**Second**, remember that what counts is not the amount of time that you put in overall; rather, it's the amount of time that you spend working on high-priority tasks.

**Third**, understand that the most important factor in setting priorities is your ability to make wise choices. You are always free to choose to engage in one activity or another

from Brian Tracy's "Time Mastery"